

Haftarah - Parshat Va Yechi (1 Kings 2:1-12)

based on the translations of

Robert Alter, Aryeh Kaplan, Stone Edition Tanach, JPS, Jerusalem Bible, New King James Bible

modeled after the recording in *Navigating the Bible II*:

<https://bible.ort.org/books/haftarotd4.asp?action=displaypage&book=1&chapter=2&verse=1&portion=13>

2:1 There drew near the time for David to die, [and he laid a charge] on Solomon his son, as follows:

2 I am about to go the way of all the earth, [so you be strong], and strive to be a man.

3 [You must observe] [that which was enjoined] | by YHWH—[by the Lord your God]—

to walk in His ways, to keep His decrees and commandments, His judgments and testimonies

[as it is written] in the Torah of Moses,

so that [you shall surely prosper] [in all] [of your] endeavors [and in any task]—

wherever you should turn, [toward a goal].

4 [So that it is sure to happen]: that upheld by YHWH [shall be His word]—

the word [that God spoke in regards to me], [when He said this]:

”If heedful are your children—[if they watch their step]—

[if they walk] [before Me] in truth [with all their heart] [and with all their soul],”

[then God said this]: ”[never cut off] from you [shall be a man] [from upon] the throne of Israel.”

5 Moreover [you yourself] [assuredly do know] [the incidents that happened]:

what was done to me by Joab [son of Tzeruya]—

that which he did [to the two commanders] of the armies [of Israel]—

to Abner son of Ner and to Amasa [son of Yether] [whom he in fact] murdered;

he shed the blood of war in peacetime, [and how he put] the blood [that was shed in battle]

on his girdle [that was around] his waist, [and on his sandals] that were on his feet.

2:6 [Therefore act] [in your wisdom]:
 [Do not let there go down] [his gray head] peaceably to the grave.
 7 [And towards the sons] of Barzillai the Gileadite, [act with kindness],
 [and let them be] [among those] [who eat at your table],
 for so they came to me, [when I did flee] [from before] Absalom your brother.
 8 [But I see] [that you have with you] Shimi [son of Gera], [who was a Benjamite] [from Bachurim].
 [And he in fact] [cursed me] with a curse quite malicious [on the day] I went to Machanaim.
 [He came down] [to meet me] at the Jordan, and I swore [to him] by YHWH by saying,
 “[I will not kill you] [with the sword].”
 9 So now [do not hold him guiltless], [because I do know]: a man of wisdom you are.
 [And you will know] [what surely] you should [do to him]:
 [you must bring down] [his gray head] in blood [to the grave].
 10 Then David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.
 11 [All of the days] of the reign of David over Israel [came to forty] years.
 In Hebron he reigned [for seven] years, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three [years in all].
 12 [Then Solomon] [took his place] [on the throne] of David his father.
 [end melody] His hold on his kingdom [was firmly established].

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta gersh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, gersh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
(Renew our days)	(She weeps bitterly).	(a fire-offering to God)

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)